# Executive Summary

*For every complex problem there is a simple solution that is wrong.*

—George Bernard Shaw

In this issue, *Joint Force Quarterly* returns to issues of grand strategy, from the training of strategists and associated concepts to a survey of regional context in its formulation and execution. Strategists cannot hope to arrive at a secure destination of mastery in the face of complexity and nonlinear change. Strategy demands an endless pursuit of contextual knowledge that is organized around and built upon a foundation of scholarship and social insight. This edition of *JFQ* is presented, in part, to reduce the risk of adopting simple solutions in its formulation.

The Forum begins with an informed essay by Dr. Thomas Mahnken, who addresses defense planning and complex operations through the prism of a "grand new bargain." The author observes that comprehensive approaches are supplanting joint operations in the evolving global security environment, consequently changing the identity of the Armed Forces. There is no denying the fact that the Department of Defense has become the principal agency to address complex contingencies and that organizational flexibility across multiple core competencies has made it possible for "other parts of the national security community to dodge their responsibilities." Efforts to build greater civilian capacity in the past have been foiled by the Federal bureaucracy and an absence of congressional support. The key to overcoming these obstacles is Presidential mandate in the form of a new National Security Planning Guidance.

The second article is from two former National War College professors who have been collaborating on a history of that institution. Their research led Dr. Janet Breslin-Smith and Colonel Cliff Krieger to conclude that, while the War College remains remarkably faithful to the vision of "Hap" Arnold, George Marshall, Dwight Eisenhower, Chester Nimitz, and James Forrestal, action is required by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to fulfill the pressing requirement for a premier "school of strategy." The authors' observations and recommendations span the college's mission, leadership, faculty, student body, and academic program, leading to a proposed framework for strategic analysis. Widening their scope to nonmilitary instruments of statecraft, they note that the War College and Industrial College of the Armed Forces were envisioned as part of a constellation of colleges that included a State Department College, Administration College, and Intelligence College. In the absence of this augmentation, the authors propose a College of Diplomacy and Development to foster greater institutional strength at the Department of State and U.S. Agency for International Development.

The third Forum installment also speaks to the development of strategists, but in this case the authors are Naval War College professors Derek Reveron and James Cook. They argue that the challenge before military strategists is to coordinate the levers of national power in a coherent, smart way that shapes the security environment and defuses situations before they become crises through a strategy of prevention at the theater level. Their essay leads the reader through the basics of strategic thought employing a U.S. prism, from levels of strategy to related principles of war and from authoritative strategic planning guidance to joint doctrine. In practice, strategic decisions must always compete with the demands of domestic politics, the most important of which concerns the "size and distribution of funds made available to the armed forces." When done correctly, "theater strategy enables the combatant commander to effectively secure U.S. national interests by obtaining and synchronizing available resources from within the interagency to achieve theater objectives within a multinational environment."

In our fourth Forum article, CNA China Analyst Dean Cheng traces American interests in East Asia from the earliest days of U.S. history to its present role as the guarantor of regional stability. Perhaps counterintuitively, East Asia is far more complex than Europe, embodying not only ideological conflicts rooted in the Cold War, but also historical animosities, unsettled borders, internal instabilities, and the absence of regional institutions that might ameliorate some of the ensuing tensions. In light of this, it is not surprising that the end of the Cold War did not abate regional tensions. Rather, it merely removed the ideological component from some of the complicated relations within the region that draw upon age-old prejudices and hatreds. The author concludes with several important points for U.S. strategists. First, there is no "Asian perspective" on issues, as all nations examine each parochially. Second, knowledge of history matters, and any U.S. action must be examined in history's light to avoid unintended consequences due to long memories. Finally, internal instability for several East Asian countries has been muted by expanding national economies. With an outlook of extended economic malaise, growing discontent and interstate tensions are likely to manifest themselves unexpectedly and violently.

The fifth article takes *JFQ* readers to the Middle East with a comparative survey of Iranian military capabilities courtesy of Dr. Richard Russell of the Near East South Asia Center for Strategic Studies. Because of the sophisticated conventional military capabilities of the United States and its Arab allies in the region, the author posits that Iran is "likely to turn to its time-tested unconventional ways of war to exploit Arab Gulf state and American vulnerabilities in future conflicts." However, the author also makes the case that Gulf Arab conventional forces are more bark than bite and cites a "massive overemphasis on the procurement of high technology and serious underemphasis on

Dust from downwash creates sparks during night landing of CH–46 in Helmand Province, Afghanistan

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manpower issues, personnel selection, training, and maintenance." It is "not much of an exaggeration to say that the first, second, and third missions of their forces are to protect the regime from internal threats, while the lagging fourth mission is to protect from external threats." On the other side of the scale, Iran's military is impressive in quantity but underwhelming in quality. The bulk of Iran's inventories are American-built weapons bought before the 1979 revolution and a mix of Soviet and Chinese weapons that are qualitatively inferior to the modern American and Western weapons systems in the Gulf Arab inventories. At the end of the day, these states will have to decide whether to balance or to appease Iranian power in the Gulf. Professor Russell concludes that Washington needs to encourage the Arab Gulf states to balance, but in doing so, it should focus less on building up their conventional military capabilities and pay more attention to the Iranian threats stemming from unconventional warfare.

From the Persian Gulf to the largest country in the world, the Forum's sixth article is a wide-ranging mosaic of Russian strategic considerations by Peter Humphrey of the Institute for National Strategic Studies. Expanding on the premise that Russia has downsized its ambitions from global dominance to Eurasian suzerainty, the author attempts to attribute numerous bilateral behaviors to a coherent strategy for success in the face of serious impediments to its most conservative aspirations. Beginning with the nations on Russia's periphery, Mr. Humphrey sketches exhibitions of insecurity and arrogance, gambits, and genuine sovereign interest. The "bizarre and unsupportable claims" that Russia has made to the Arctic make clear a desperate attempt to survive as a broker of raw materials in the absence of an ability to compete in the technology market. The author subsequently explores the demographic trends that he characterizes as disastrous and that help to account for contemporary aggressive behavior. He concludes with a series of issues for the West, extrapolated from the foregoing argument.

The Forum concludes with an insightful article from a frequent *JFQ* contributor, Dr. Stephen Cimbala of Pennsylvania State University–Brandywine. In this essay, he considers various options for U.S.-Russia strategic nuclear arms reductions within the larger politico-military context of post–Cold War geopolitics and offers a provisional assessment of prospects for success. He presents hypothetical treaty-compliant and smaller forces for both the United States and Russia, conditions for their employment, and an analysis of outcomes. Beyond raw data, he subsequently addresses the psychological impact of deterrence, coercion, and reassurance. Dr. Cimbala concludes with the description of two dangers for Presidents Dmitry Medvedev and Barack Obama if they move beyond nuclear stasis. First, the arms control process must not become the province of arms control experts and "bean counters" who threaten progress and, second, it would be unwise to rush to agreement for agreement's sake. **JFQ**

—D.H. Gurney